

# Transgender Media Lab

## Anti-Racist Accountability Report

June 2020–December 2021

**Version 1.2. Last Updated February 24, 2024.**

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*This report was written on the unceded and unsundered territory of the Algonquin Nation and on Treaty 4 lands—the territories of the nêhiyawak, Anihšīnāpēk, Dakota, Lakota, and Nakoda peoples, and the homeland of the Métis/Michif Nation. We acknowledge that the Transgender Media Lab's home institution, Carleton University, has benefitted and continues to benefit from generations of theft of land and resources, and we undertake to understand the obligations that this multi-generational transfer creates for us.*

### Summary of version changes

**v1.0** First publication of this report on our website in May 2022.

**v1.1** Replaced missing [1.2.3. 2022–2023 Front End Developer & Analyst Position](#) table. Changes are highlighted in yellow. Republished to website in September 2022.

**v1.2** Moved summary of version changes to title page. Separated Recommendations Summary from Table of Contents. Removed change highlights. Republished to website in February 2024.

## Table of contents

### [Table of contents](#)

#### [Usability Report Anti-Racist Recommendations \(Summary\)](#)

### [Introduction](#)

#### [Accountability Steps Taken Before the Usability Report](#)

### [Usability Report Anti-Racist Recommendations](#)

#### [1. Recommendation: Incorporate more BIPOC leadership at all levels of the project](#)

[1.1. All positions to be publicly advertised with job ads stating that BIPOC trans candidates are especially encouraged to apply.](#)

[1.2. BIPOC trans candidates be prioritized in hiring](#)

[1.2.1 2021–2022 Graduate RA Positions](#)

[Summary of this data](#)

[1.2.2. 2021–2022 Undergraduate RA Positions](#)

[Summary of this data](#)

[1.2.3. 2022–2023 Front End Developer & Analyst Position](#)

[Summary of this data](#)

[1.3. There always be at least one Black and at least one Indigenous member of the project Advisory Board](#)

[1.4. Prioritize recruiting BIPOC users in the usability tests](#)

[1.5. BIPOC trans filmmakers be prioritized on the website](#)

[General](#)

[Homepage](#)

[About page](#)

[Support Trans Artists page](#)

[Teaching and Bibliographies pages](#)

[Two Spirit and BIPOC filmmakers pages](#)

[Create the following new pages](#)

[1.6. Ensure that the Advisory Board has a majority \(>50%\) BIPOC membership](#)

[The Community Advisory Board will be:](#)

[The Technical Advisory Board will:](#)

[1.7. Prioritize BIPOC candidates for the directorship when it transfers from Dr. Horak's term](#)

[1.8. Prioritize BIPOC-run software development companies and developers when](#)



[grants allow us to hire professional support](#)

[1.9. Specifically seek out BIPOC communities when recruiting new students to Carleton for Research Assistantships by sending the ad to relevant organizations...](#)

[Professional organizations:](#)

[BIPOC leaders in Ottawa and beyond:](#)

[Historically Black colleges and universities and African-American Studies departments:](#)

[In the 2022–2023 search for a front-end developer, we sent the ads to everyone listed above except the HBCUs and to:](#)

[1.10. Make additional efforts to share job ads with existing BIPOC trans students at Carleton, University of Ottawa, and Algonquin College...](#)

[The 2020–21 job ads were sent to the following BIPOC organizations at Carleton:](#)

[Beyond Carleton:](#)

[1.11. Apply for new grants that allow the project to hire people who are not current university students, thus widening the pool of potential BIPOC trans candidates](#)

[1.12. Connect to Algonquin Anishinaabe community leadership in the territory where Carleton University is located](#)

[1.13. Post a yearly report on the website assessing our status in relation to these goals](#)

## [2. Further Usability Report Recommendations Related to Anti-Racism](#)

[2.1. Rewrite language on the public website and in the pilot database to be more accessible](#)

[2.2. Add a living glossary to the website](#)

[2.3. Rearrange the layout of the homepage](#)

[2.4. Add photos to the BIPOC Trans Filmmakers page](#)

[2.5. Be transparent about the project's limitations](#)

## [3. Additional Anti-Racist Lab Activities](#)

### [Conclusion](#)

#### [Key Learnings](#)

[1. Continue all in-progress actions \(above\).](#)

[2. Implement the following New Recommendations:](#)

[3. Post an updated accountability report in May 2023.](#)

## Usability Report Anti-Racist Recommendations (Summary)

### 1. Recommendation: Incorporate more BIPOC leadership at all levels of the project

<u>1.1. All positions to be publicly advertised with job ads stating that BIPOC trans candidates are especially encouraged to apply.</u>	↗ Implemented ▾
<u>1.2. BIPOC trans candidates be prioritized in hiring</u>	↗ Implemented ▾
<u>1.2.1 2021–2022 Graduate RA Positions</u>	New Recommendation ▾
<u>1.2.2. 2021–2022 Undergraduate RA Positions</u>	New Recommendation ▾
<u>1.2.3. 2022–2023 Front End Developer &amp; Analyst Position</u>	New Recommendation ▾
<u>1.3. There always be at least one Black and at least one Indigenous member of the project Advisory Board</u>	↗ Implemented ▾
<u>1.4. Prioritize recruiting BIPOC users in the usability tests</u>	↗ Implemented ▾ New Recommendation ▾
<u>1.5. BIPOC trans filmmakers be prioritized on the website</u>	– In progress ▾ New Recommendation ▾
<u>1.6. Ensure that the Advisory Board has a majority (&gt;50%) BIPOC membership</u>	– In progress ▾ New Recommendation ▾
<u>1.7. Prioritize BIPOC candidates for the directorship when it transfers from Dr. Horak’s term</u>	X Not yet started ▾ New Recommendation ▾
<u>1.8. Prioritize BIPOC-run software development companies and developers when grants allow us to hire professional support</u>	X Not yet started ▾



<u>1.9. Specifically seek out BIPOC communities when recruiting new students to Carleton for Research Assistantships by sending the ad to relevant organizations...</u>	↑ Implemented ▾
<u>1.10. Make additional efforts to share job ads with existing BIPOC trans students at Carleton, University of Ottawa, and Algonquin College...</u>	↑ Implemented ▾
<u>1.11. Apply for new grants that allow the project to hire people who are not current university students, thus widening the pool of potential BIPOC trans candidates</u>	– In progress ▾
<u>1.12. Connect to Algonquin Anishinaabe community leadership in the territory where Carleton University is located</u>	– In progress ▾
<u>1.13. Post a yearly report on the website assessing our status in relation to these goals</u>	↑ Implemented ▾

## 2. Further Usability Report Recommendations Related to Anti-Racism

<u>2.1. Rewrite language on the public website and in the pilot database to be more accessible</u>	– In progress ▾
<u>2.2. Add a living glossary to the website</u>	– In progress ▾
<u>2.3. Rearrange the layout of the homepage</u>	– In progress ▾
<u>2.4. Add photos to the BIPOC Trans Filmmakers page</u>	– In progress ▾
<u>2.5. Be transparent about the project's limitations</u>	– In progress ▾

## Introduction

By building the Transgender Media Portal (TMP), the Transgender Media Lab (TML) at Carleton University aims to make audiovisual work by trans, Two Spirit, nonbinary, intersex, and gender-nonconforming people more available to artists, activists, festival programmers, researchers, instructors, and the public. We want to promote the careers of today's trans<sup>1</sup> filmmakers, call attention to older works so that they can be programmed and preserved, jumpstart research on these films, and provide artists with access to an innovative tradition of work. Acknowledging the hierarchies that exist within trans arts communities, our project strives to centre BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour)<sup>2</sup> and disabled trans and Two-Spirit artists.

The TMP project began at Carleton University in June 2017 when Laura Horak, a film studies professor and the project's director/principal investigator (PI), received a SSHRC Insight Development Grant (IDG) to fund the project's initial activities. In February 2020, the TMP team held a series of usability tests and consultations. One of the recommendations that came out of these consultations was to "incorporate more BIPOC leadership at all levels of the project."<sup>3</sup> The TMP team then came up with 13 specific steps to implement this goal, one of which is to "post a yearly report on the website assessing our success at these goals." This report is the first such yearly report assessing our actions to incorporate more BIPOC leadership. It is being released in May 2022 about the year 2021 because the TMP project was largely put on hold in the 2020–2021 academic year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Horak's sabbatical.

In this report, we offer a status report on where we are in meeting these goals, and describe the strategies we plan to implement to continue to further meet these goals. As with the lab's other policy documents, which are understood as "living" and thus committed to constant renewal and recommitment, this accountability report offers a momentary snapshot of a larger ongoing and dynamic process. The ongoing work of addressing systemic structural barriers is an obligation we prioritize throughout all of our activities.

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<sup>1</sup> We use trans broadly throughout this report to include trans, nonbinary, intersex, and gender-nonconforming people.

<sup>2</sup> We define BIPOC as a political coalitional term inclusive of a wide range of Black and Indigenous people and people of colour, including (but not limited to) Afro-Indigenous, Afro-Latinx, Latinx, Asian/Asian-Canadian/Asian-American, and Pacific Islander.

<sup>3</sup> Kit Chokly et al., "Usability Test Report 2020," 2020, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/6c36-jn33>, 26.



As we endeavour to continually reassert our commitment to prioritizing BIPOC experiences and material realities, our process involves actively questioning what it means to design and generate a social-justice-oriented digital archival project within the historically white supremacist context and tradition of “higher” learning institutions. From hiring practices, to interpersonal communication strategies, to platform design, we aim to orient all of our activities in the service of this social liberationist imperative.

Securely at the heart of this project, our commitment to BIPOC lives is an ongoing, intentional, and active process, anchored in anti-racism and anti-oppression work, and involving regular training, reflection, and education, at both the group, and individual levels. This means regularly questioning ourselves, and each other – our biases, our conditioning, our motivations, and above all our privilege. It means ensuring that our collective decisions meet our lab values and are informed by the latest best practices as articulated by the marginalized communities whose voices and work we aspire to amplify. And it means that we practice humility, and are honest about our limitations, while continually reaching for the tools and knowledge that will enable us to move forward in a good way.

Although this accountability report came about in response to a specific recommendation about increasing BIPOC leadership, we also report here on several other usability test recommendations that are related to anti-racism and that will help ensure the TMP is accountable to, and meets the needs of, BIPOC trans and Two Spirit communities.

## Accountability Steps Taken Before the Usability Report

As a white cis queer researcher, Horak strove, from the inception of the TMP, to include trans voices in each step of the project design and implementation. When the project started in 2017, these steps included: surveying approximately 40 trans and queer filmmakers, archivists, and scholars before applying for the grant; establishing an advisory board of trans scholars, filmmakers, and activists (which was 1/3 Black and Indigenous); and planning for community consultations. She also prioritized hiring trans and BIPOC students for the project’s Research Assistant (RA) positions.



During the project's initial IDG phase (2017–2020), 4 RAs hired onto the project were white trans students and 1 RA was a cis queer Indigenous student. Additionally, the TMP worked with one Latinx cis man and 1 Black cis man through its affiliation with Carleton University's Audio-Visual Resource Centre (AVRC). No BIPOC trans candidates applied to any of the positions during this period. (See items 1.9 and 1.10 for our actions to widen the applicant pool to include BIPOC trans applicants.) Since 2017, the project manager has been a white cis woman and the lead developer (an employee of Carleton's AVRC who is volunteering his time) is a white cis man.

In April 2019, with the support of an Ontario Early Researcher Award, Horak founded the Transgender Media Lab (TML) as a virtual and physical home for student researchers working on the Transgender Media Portal (i.e. lab members) and students and scholars working at the intersections of transgender studies and cinema and media studies (i.e. lab affiliates). The usability tests/consultations were conducted in February 2020 and the report on them was published in June 2020.

In April 2020, Horak won a SSHRC Insight Grant (2020-2025) to create the public version of the Transgender Media Portal database. That fall, a white cis queer co-investigator and a white trans nonbinary PhD student joined the project leadership team. A leadership team was constituted in Fall 2020 made up of the PI (white cis), the co-investigator (white cis), the project manager (white cis), and the PhD fellow (white nonbinary) and this team continues to lead the project. Given that the TMP aims to support trans arts communities, particularly BIPOC trans filmmakers, it is a problem that the project's current leadership team is all white and that everyone on the leadership team, except for one trans PhD student, is cisgender.

For the 2021–2022 academic year, the team of RAs was radically expanded and we tried our best to put our commitments into action.



## Usability Report Anti-Racist Recommendations

Below are the recommendations from the usability test concerning anti-racism and an audit of the TMP's actions to achieve these recommendations.

↗ Implemented ▾	Indicates that an action has been implemented
– In progress ▾	Indicates that an action is in the process of being implemented
X Not yet started ▾	Indicates that action has not yet started
New Recommendation ▾	Indicates a new recommendation

### 1. Recommendation: Incorporate more BIPOC leadership at all levels of the project<sup>4</sup>

The TMP team came up with 13 action items to address this recommendation, including five that were already ongoing (actions 1.1 through 1.5 below). In this section, we conduct an audit of the project's progress on these 13 action items during 2021.

#### 1.1. All positions to be publicly advertised with job ads stating that BIPOC trans candidates are especially encouraged to apply.

↗ Implemented ▾ May 2019–present

In 2017–2018, the project's RAships were offered directly to specific trans undergraduate students who did well in Film Studies courses and all of these students were white. Consequently, as there is a lack of BIPOC trans film studies students at Carleton, the TMP began to advertise all RA positions publicly starting in May 2019 in order to reach a larger and more diverse group of applicants and to ensure that the opportunities were available to students who hadn't had previous contact with the project's director.

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<sup>4</sup> This is recommendation 6.4 in the Usability Test Report 2020, p. 25.



The job ads in May and August 2019 read: “Trans, queer, Black, and Indigenous candidates and candidates of color are especially encouraged to apply.”

Job ads posted in December 2019 and October 2020 were updated to read:

“The Transgender Media Lab is committed to principles of equality and social justice. We especially encourage trans, queer, Black, and Indigenous candidates and candidates of colour to apply. Fellows will be expected to agree to a statement of values and abide by a code of conduct to ensure a safe, supportive working environment for all lab members and guests.”

The additional language was inspired by Benjamin Woo’s [RoCCET Lab Fellowship](#) announcement.

## 1.2. BIPOC trans candidates be prioritized in hiring

↗ Implemented - Winter 2021

### 1.2.1 2021–2022 Graduate RA Positions

In October 2020, the TML posted five graduate student RAships:

- Contributor Experience Designer
- Front-End Developer and Analyst
- Digital Privacy Analyst
- and two TML PhD Fellows.

Three of the positions were filled for the 2021–2022 academic year. Below is a breakdown of the demographics of applicants, interviewees, and successful candidates for each position.<sup>5</sup>

All of the data about applicants are based on self-identification in the applicants’ cover letters. In the job posting, we invited trans, queer, Black, and Indigenous candidates and candidates of colour to self-identify in their cover letter.

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to candidates who applied directly for these positions, we also considered applicants to Carleton graduate programs and current students who didn’t apply to the TML. We have included them in these numbers if we interviewed them or offered them a position, but we didn’t include them if we didn’t interview them.

The data on people hired is from a survey we developed to simultaneously capture data for this accountability report and test drive identity categories for our database. We acknowledge that describing identity through limited, pre-existing categories asks us to account for our persons in limiting language and concepts, and in ways that risk reproducing the kinds of data gathering that have historically been used as mechanisms of oppression. The survey and this accountability report is intended to be a transparent and "living" document. As such, we welcome all feedback as we continually work to improve the way we attend to our core values and commitments.

<b>Graduate Positions</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>BIPOC Trans</b>	<b>White Trans</b>	<b>Trans</b> (no race/ ethnicity disclosed)	<b>BIPOC</b> (no gender modality disclosed)	<b>Did not disclose identity</b>
<b>Contributor Experience Designer</b>						
Applications received	2			1	1	
Applicants interviewed	2			1	1	
Job offers made	1			1		
<b>Offers accepted</b>	<b>1</b>			<b>1</b>		
<b>Front End Developer and Analyst</b> (This position remained unfilled until April 2022)						
Applications received	3				2	
Applicants interviewed	2				2	
Job offers made	1				1	
<b>Offers accepted</b>	<b>0</b>				<b>0</b>	
<b>Digital Privacy Analyst—Received no applications</b>						
<b>TML MA/PhD Fellowships—2 positions</b>						
Applications received	7	1	1	3	1	1
Applicants interviewed	5	1	2	2	1	
Job offers made	3	1	2	1		
<b>Offers accepted</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>			

*Summary of this data*

In the one instance where there was a BIPOC trans applicant for a graduate RA position, the TML hired this candidate. In the two instances where there were BIPOC cis candidates and white trans candidates, the TML hired the white trans applicants.

New Recommendation ▾

- Develop a more clearly defined protocol for how the TML prioritizes candidates in hiring.
- Decide whether or not to prioritize additional identities (e.g. trans) in the hiring process when there are no BIPOC trans candidates.
- Ask all applicants to fill out a short demographic survey so that our accountability data will be more accurate. This survey will take the variability and fluidity of identity into account.

**1.2.2. 2021–2022 Undergraduate RA Positions**

In Fall 2021, the TML posted two undergraduate RA positions in hopes of hiring for one research position and one tech position. Since the TMP leadership team had identified a need for tech expertise, and there were two strong tech candidates, we ended up creating another undergraduate RA tech position.

All of the data below are based on self-identification in the applicants’ cover letters. In the job posting, we invited trans, queer, Black, and Indigenous candidates and candidates of colour to self-identify in their cover letter.

<b>Undergraduate Positions</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>BIPOC Trans</b>	<b>BIPOC Gender Questioning</b>	<b>White Trans</b>	<b>Trans (no race/ethnicity disclosed)</b>	<b>BIPOC (no gender modality disclosed)</b>	<b>Did not disclose identity</b>
<b>Tech Team RA–2 positions</b>							
Applications received	4	1			2	1	
Applicants interviewed	3	1			1	1	
Job offers made	2	1			1		



<b>Undergraduate Positions</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>BIPOC Trans</b>	<b>BIPOC Gender Questioning</b>	<b>White Trans</b>	<b>Trans (no race/ethnicity disclosed)</b>	<b>BIPOC (no gender modality disclosed)</b>	<b>Did not disclose identity</b>
<b>Offers accepted</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>			<b>1</b>		
<b>Front End Developer and Analyst</b> (This position remained unfilled until April 2022)							
Applications received	3					2	
Applicants interviewed	2					2	
Job offers made	1					1	
<b>Offers accepted</b>	<b>0</b>					<b>0</b>	
<b>Digital Privacy Analyst—Received no applications</b>							
<b>Research Team RA</b>							
Applications received	26	2	1		4	9	9
Applicants interviewed	5	2	1			1	
Job offers made	1		1				
<b>Offers accepted</b>			<b>1</b>				

*Summary of this data*

For the tech positions, 1 applicant identified as BIPOC trans (mixed Japanese and white), 2 applicants identified as trans, and 1 as BIPOC. We were pleased to discover two candidates with such excellent and relevant technical skills, so we ended up hiring 2 candidates—1 BIPOC trans and one trans (no race/ethnicity disclosed).

We were heartened by the number and excellence of candidates who applied for the undergraduate research position and, in particular, the number of BIPOC trans and gender-questioning candidates. All the applicants we interviewed (5) were BIPOC. Two were BIPOC trans, one was BIPOC gender-questioning, and one was BIPOC cis (and also disabled). We ended up hiring the BIPOC gender-questioning candidate. While this candidate was not openly trans like two of the BIPOC candidates, their overall application was stronger and they brought with them experience and strong ties to Black activist communities, as well as unique Afro-Indigenous lived experience.

New Recommendation ▾

- As BIPOC trans people at Carleton appear to be mostly undergraduates, we recommend finding ways for them to be involved in the project beyond RAships, such as a seat on the Community Advisory Board.
- Apply graduate hiring recommendations to undergraduates as well.

### 1.2.3. 2022–2023 Front End Developer & Analyst Position

In December 2021, the TML reposted the position of Front End Developer and Analyst that had not been filled the year before. This time we opened the position to any graduate student at any Canadian or US institution.

All of the data below are based on self-identification in the applicants’ cover letters. In the job posting, we invited trans, queer, Black, and Indigenous candidates and candidates of colour to self-identify in their cover letter.

Front End Developer	Total	BIPOC Trans	Trans (no race/ ethnicity disclosed)	BIPOC (no gender modality disclosed)	Did not disclose identity
Applications received	6	2	2		2
Applicants interviewed	3	1	2		
Job offers made	2	1	1		
<b>Offers accepted</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>		

*Summary of this data*

We received six applications altogether, including two from BIPOC trans candidates. We interviewed three applicants, all trans, and one BIPOC and trans. We did not interview the second BIPOC trans applicant because their application materials suggested that they did not have the specific technical skills that this position requires.

Because one of the candidates had strong front end developer skills and another had strong data analysis experience, we ended up hiring two candidates, one BIPOC trans and one trans (no race/ethnicity disclosed).



If it is feasible given his workload, we hope to add our newly hired Front End Developer, who is BIPOC trans and may co-lead the tech team, to the leadership team in Fall 2022.

### 1.3. There always be at least one Black and at least one Indigenous member of the project Advisory Board

↗ Implemented ▾ 2017

Since the Advisory Board was established in June 2017, there has always been one Black and one Indigenous board member.

In the 2020 Usability Test Report, the TMP committed to ensuring the Advisory Board has a majority (>50%) BIPOC membership. [See action item 1.6.](#)

### 1.4. Prioritize recruiting BIPOC users in the usability tests

↗ Implemented ▾ Jan/Feb 2020

To date, the TMP has held one usability test/community consultation, in February 2020, and recruiting BIPOC users was prioritized for this testing session. All of the six test users were trans. Two of the test users identified as Black, one identified as a racialized refugee, and three identified as white.

#### New Recommendation ▾

- The TMP plans to run additional usability test/community consultations in 2022–23. Given the importance of community consultations, we recommend the TMP make a stronger commitment that not only prioritizes recruiting BIPOC users but that **ensures at least half (50%) of test users** in the project's usability tests with trans filmmakers are BIPOC, that such usability tests have **at least one Indigenous user and one disabled user, and that all test users be trans or Two Spirit.**



## 1.5. BIPOC trans filmmakers be prioritized on the website

– In progress –

When the [TMP website](#) was first launched in November 2019, it aimed to prioritize BIPOC trans filmmakers by including a page devoted to BIPOC trans filmmakers. The website also has, on the top right of every page, a “Support Trans Artists” button that connects to a page where users can contribute to fundraising efforts by trans filmmakers and media organizations. BIPOC trans filmmakers and organizations are also prioritized on that page.

Two of the usability test participants remarked that the experience of seeing the whiteness of the team on the website made them hesitant about participating. As the TML works toward improving the demographic constituency of the team, we are additionally reviewing the layout of information and images on the website to find conceptual, design, layout, and content strategies to better prioritize the work of BIPOC trans filmmakers. In 2021–2022, the TML research team embarked on a process of decentering whiteness on the TMP website and continuing to improve our commitment to supporting BIPOC trans filmmakers.

Team members who are engaged in the process of decentering whiteness on the TMP website have identified numerous ways to better reflect our commitment to prioritize the work of BIPOC trans artists. These recommendations include:

### General

- Add a land acknowledgement to website’s footer
- Move all BIPOC content to the top of pages
- Establish a less institutional aesthetic to make the page more inviting to non-academics
- Use plain language whenever possible
- Include invitations for feedback on all pages
- Include date stamps of last updates for all pages
- Use large print, with different font sizes available
- Ensure all images have appropriate alt text





- Use headings in their appropriate structures

## **Homepage**

- Add a welcome in Anishinabemowin (Algonquin) and English
- Change the banner image of the camera to film stills from BIPOC trans filmmakers
- Move logos to bottom of home page or About page
- Add direct link to BIPOC Trans Filmmakers page

## **About page**

- Explicitly state the TMP values and link to TML Handbook
- When referencing indigeneity, explicitly state that we are focused on Indigenous filmmakers on Turtle Island
- Add statement about the project's limitations
- Encourage self-identification and information about the territories/treaties where we are from in team bios (following CLEAR Lab examples)
- Prioritize femmes and people of colour when listing Advisory Board members

## **Support Trans Artists page**

- Explicitly prioritize BIPOC trans filmmakers
- Include a link to this page on the BIPOC Trans Filmmakers page

## **Teaching and Bibliographies pages**

- Add more Indigenous and Two Spirit resources
- Add subheadings such as Two Spirit and Decolonization
- With permission, add photos, especially of BIPOC scholars and book covers we would want to highlight
- Change name of "Teaching" page to "University Course Outlines" and add paragraph explaining structural reasons there are not more outlines created by BIPOC trans instructors

## **Two Spirit and BIPOC filmmakers pages**

- Highlight the work of Afro-Indigenous filmmakers
- Add glossary of terms we want to use and avoid using



- Update “Contact Us” page to describe accessible formats and communication supports

## **Create the following new pages**

- Lists of Two Spirit Filmmakers, Disabled Filmmakers, and Intersex Filmmakers
- Indigenous Initiatives (teach about and support local Algonquin initiatives, organizations, and Two Spirit artists; highlight TML Indigenous collaborations; link to online tool that shows which lands you are on)
- Find Support (for trans artists, especially BIPOC trans artists, looking for financial support)
- Accessibility (describe the project’s commitment to accessibility and disability justice in conceptual and material terms)
- Policies (post all of our project’s policies and guiding documents publicly)

As of April 2022, we are in the middle of implementing the first round of revisions—those that involve editing text and changing the order of text on the website, which will be implemented on the current Drupal-based website. The structural changes will be incorporated into the design of the new HTML-based website that we plan to have a working version of by Fall 2022.

In tandem with the website revisions, we have developed a BIPOC Community Relations Policy and Social Media Policy. These policies will further buttress our commitment to the methods we implement towards prioritizing BIPOC trans filmmakers in our online communication and design strategies. In an effort to be transparent, we have also committed to making all of our policies and decision-making processes publicly available on the TMP website. These will be posted on the website in May 2022.

### New Recommendation ▾

- Complete first round of website revisions in Spring 2022.
- Incorporate structural changes and aesthetic commitment to anti-racism into HTML website design.
- Include questions about whiteness and anti-racism in the next round of usability tests/community consultations.



## 1.6. Ensure that the Advisory Board has a majority (>50%) BIPOC membership

– In progress ▾

In 2021, the TMP implemented two-year term limits for the advisory board to avoid posing an undue burden on board members and to help the TMP receive a range of different perspectives over time. Thus, in December 2021, terms ended for the Advisory Board members who had been serving since 2017, and the TMP invited another five people to become members of the Community Advisory Board. Of the five new board members, all are trans or Two Spirit, three are BIPOC, and three are disabled.

In summer 2021, the TMP leadership team reconstituted the role and membership of the Advisory Board, which has since been renamed the Community Advisory Board. The TMP leadership team is also in the process of establishing a Technical Advisory Board.

In addition to reconstituting the Community Advisory Board with majority BIPOC trans members, the TMP leadership team also gave the board more authority by formally defining its role, and implemented a policy to pay board members a yearly honorarium for their time and expertise.

### **The Community Advisory Board will be:**

- An all-trans, Two-Spirit, nonbinary, intersex, and/or gender-nonconforming board with more than 50% BIPOC membership
- Comprised of members who are representatives of the various kinds of users that the project hopes will use and benefit from the database, including trans filmmakers, festival programmers, educators, distributors, archivists, researchers, activists, high school students
- Comprised of between 5 and 8 members (usually 6) who are collaboratively selected by the TMP leadership team and invited to serve two-year terms on the board
- Required to meet twice per year
  - Members are required to attend board meetings and respond to ad hoc email queries



- Each member will be paid an annual honorarium of \$500

### The Technical Advisory Board will:

- Prioritize trans and BIPOC members
- Be comprised of between 5 and 8 members (usually 6) who have expertise in UX experience, design experience, web accessibility, library/archival systems, etc.
- Be required to respond to ad hoc email queries and meet with the TMP team upon request
  - Each board member will be paid an honorarium of \$500

As of April 2022, the TMP has not decided who to invite to the Technical Advisory Board. Invitations will be sent out in Fall 2022.

#### New Recommendation ▾

- Amend the commitment to read: “Ensure that the **Community** Advisory Board has a majority (>50%) BIPOC membership **and that the Technical Advisory Board prioritize trans and BIPOC members.**”
- Create a protocol articulating how the project will prioritize BIPOC members for the Technical Advisory Board.

#### 1.7. Prioritize BIPOC candidates for the directorship when it transfers from Dr. Horak’s term

X Not yet started ▾

In order to keep the Transgender Media Portal hosted, maintained, and updated in the long-term, Dr. Horak would eventually like to hand the project administration off to a trans, LGBT, and/or film organization (like the UCLA Film and Television Archive, the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria, or the San Francisco Transgender Film Festival). That way the project’s longevity will not be dependent on a single individual or on time-limited academic grants.



Before the project is handed off, the goal is to create a robust database tool with minimal maintenance requirements using a minimal computing approach. Nevertheless, in order for the project to be sustained in the long term, its new home will need to have secure year-after-year base funding, technical infrastructure, and personnel with the time and expertise to host, maintain, and update the website and its underlying spreadsheets and code.

In Spring 2020 when the TML team was responding to the usability report, we committed to prioritizing BIPOC candidates for the directorship when the project transfers from Dr. Horak's term. However, upon considering the financial and technical resources needed to host, maintain, and update the tool as well as the kinds of organizations that would be motivated to take on such a project in the long term, Dr. Horak realized that most of these organizations do not have BIPOC trans leadership or, indeed, very many BIPOC trans staff members at all, let alone with the needed expertise. On the other hand, the sad fact is that BIPOC trans-led organizations don't tend to have secure year-after-year base funding, technical infrastructure, and personnel with the time and expertise to host, maintain, and update a project like this one. Handing the project off to a BIPOC trans director who doesn't have the resources needed to support the project could create an undue burden on this person and jeopardize the long term sustainability of the project.

Therefore, Dr. Horak decided to change this action from "Prioritize BIPOC candidates for the directorship" to: "Ensure future project director maintains and expands project's commitment to centering BIPOC trans filmmakers and commits to hiring and mentoring more BIPOC trans workers in their own organization and to creating an anti-racist work environment."

#### New Recommendation ▾

- Amend the commitment to: "Ensure future project director maintains and expands project's commitment to centering BIPOC trans filmmakers and commits to hiring and mentoring more BIPOC trans workers in their own organization and to creating an anti-racist work environment."



1.8. Prioritize BIPOC-run software development companies and developers when grants allow us to hire professional support

X Not yet started ▾

The TMP has not yet reached the point of needing to hire a software development company or developer. Therefore, this commitment has not yet been implemented.

1.9. Specifically seek out BIPOC communities when recruiting new students to Carleton for Research Assistantships by sending the ad to relevant organizations...

... including the Black Studies Association of Canada, the Native American Art Studies Association (NAASA), and the Native American Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA); BIPOC leaders and community organizations in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal; relevant departments at historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); and asking members of the Advisory Board to share it with their networks

↗ Implemented ▾ 2020-21

The 2020–21 job ads were sent to the following BIPOC organizations and leaders in so-called Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal:

**Professional organizations:**

- Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA)
- Native American Art Studies Association (NAASA)
- Native American Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA)
- Indigenous Literary Studies Association
- Global Outlook Digital Humanities
- Digital Humanities Association of Nigeria
- Network for Digital Humanities in Africa
- Society of Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS)-Indigenous listserv
- SCMS-Black Caucus
- SCMS-Asian/Pacific American Caucus



- SCMS-Latino/a Caucus
- National Women's Studies Association (NWSA)-Queer and Trans People of Color Caucus
- NWSA-Indigenous Peoples Caucus
- NWSA-Women of Color Caucus

### **BIPOC leaders in Ottawa and beyond:**

- Michael Charles, Assistant Vice-President and University Advisor, Equity and Inclusive Communities, Carleton
- Kahente Horn-Miller, Associate Professor, School of Indigenous and Canadian Studies, Carleton
- Benny Michaud, Director, Centre for Indigenous Initiatives, Carleton
- Raven Davis
- Syrus Marcus Ware
- Thirza Cuthand
- Aymar Jean Christian
- C. Riley Snorton
- Javier Garcia
- Anna Shah Hoque
- May Haduong

### **Historically Black colleges and universities and African-American Studies departments:**

- Spelman College
- Howard University
- Xavier University of Louisiana
- Tuskegee University
- Hampton University
- Florida A&M University
- African American History, Culture and Digital Humanities (AADHUM) at College of Arts and Humanities (ARHU), University of Maryland, College Park

We also intended to email relevant departments at tribal colleges. However, the “cold call” emails to faculty and administrators at relevant departments at HBCUs did not yield any responses (with the exception of AADHUM at University of Maryland, College



Park), so we decided not to continue sending uninvited emails to them or to send similar emails to tribal colleges. We then looked up LGBT student organizations at HBCUs and tribal colleges to contact, but most schools either did not have them or we couldn't find contact information online. In the future, we will work to expand our personal networks of BIPOC queer and trans leaders, as people we know are more likely to pass our job postings on.

**In the 2022–2023 search for a front-end developer, we sent the ads to everyone listed above except the HBCUs and to:**

- African Canadian Association of Ottawa
- Federation of Black Canadians
- Congress of Black Women Ontario
- Carleton's Racialized and Indigenous Faculty Alliance (RIFA)
- Carleton's Office of Indigenous Initiatives: Teaching and Research
- Fady Shanouda
- Andrés López
- Eriq Zhang
- micha cárdenas

1.10. Make additional efforts to share job ads with existing BIPOC trans students at Carleton, University of Ottawa, and Algonquin College...

... by circulating ads to the Black Student Alliance at Carleton, African Students' Association of Carleton, Centre for Indigenous Initiatives, Ojigkwanong and Mawandoseg Centre and through word-of-mouth

↗ Implemented ▾ 2020–21

**The 2020–21 job ads were sent to the following BIPOC organizations at Carleton:**

- Black Student Alliance
- African Students' Association
- Centre for Indigenous Initiatives
- Mawandoseg Centre
- Ojigkwanong Centre





**Beyond Carleton:**

- Mamidosewin Centre (Indigenous Student Centre at Algonquin College)

1.11. Apply for new grants that allow the project to hire people who are not current university students, thus widening the pool of potential BIPOC trans candidates

– In progress ▾

The TMP did not apply for any new grants in 2021. However, the TMP’s Insight grant does allow the project to hire people who are not current university students. Currently, the TMP has not opened up its positions to non-university students; however, if no qualified candidates had applied for the Front End & Developer Analyst position in early 2022, we were planning to extend the job call to applicants who are not university students.

Further, in an effort to widen the pool of potential BIPOC trans candidates, the TMP has opened all its positions to university students at institutions beyond Carleton and the University of Ottawa. For example, in 2021, the TMP hired one RA who is enrolled at McMaster University and attends TMP meetings remotely. The most recent job ad for the Front End & Developer Analyst explicitly states that “students who will be enrolled in any graduate program in Canada and the United States in Fall 2022 are also eligible to apply” and that “students not based in Ottawa can work remotely.”

1.12. Connect to Algonquin Anishinaabe community leadership in the territory where Carleton University is located

– In progress ▾

In fall 2021, the TMP created an Indigenous working group to connect with and consult Indigenous trans and Two-Spirit arts organizations and Algonquin Anishinaabe leaders in the unceded territory where Carleton University is located.

In 2021–2022, the Indigenous working group consulted on and began implementing the decentering whiteness website revisions, participated (along with Dr. Horak) in



Carleton's [Kinàmàgawin Indigenous Learning Certificate](#), and has created a list of local Indigenous artists and leaders to consult with, as well as a running list of items we are hoping to get feedback on. We plan to hold these consultations in 2022–2023 and take additional actions based on the feedback we receive.

1.13. Post a yearly report on the website assessing our status in relation to these goals

↗ Implemented ▾ May 2022

We are posting this accountability report on the TMP website in May 2022.

## 2. Further Usability Report Recommendations Related to Anti-Racism

Although the intention of the yearly accountability report was to track the TMP's progress on incorporating more BIPOC leadership at all levels of the project, we consider the following usability test recommendations to be additionally related to anti-racism and thus have conducted an audit on the TMP's actions to achieve the following recommendations as well.

2.1. Rewrite language on the public website and in the pilot database to be more accessible

— In progress ▾

During the usability test, three users stated that the writing on the Description page of the TMP website was too long and too academic.<sup>6</sup> Since the TMP will be used by the public, artists, activists, high school educators, and festival programmers in addition to university researchers and instructors, it is important that the language on the TMP website be accessible to everyone using the website. Therefore, the *Usability Test*

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<sup>6</sup> Kit Chokly et al., "Usability Test Report 2020," 2020, 22-23.



*Report 2020* recommends, “The public website...be reviewed for unnecessarily academic and inaccessible wording.”<sup>7</sup>

Rewriting the language on the TMP website to be more widely accessible is one of the recommendations that has been added to the decentering whiteness audit of the website. We began the first round of implementation in April 2022. We will continue to discuss what we mean by “accessible language” and “plain language” and how to tell whether we are meeting these goals in 2022–2023 and will take this into account as we add new content to the website.

The 2020 usability testers also practiced adding data into the Drupal version of the TMP database and found some of the language in the database inaccessible. However, we decided in summer 2021 to change from a Drupal database-backed site to a spreadsheet-backed HTML site so that the project would be more sustainable in the long term and the data would be easier for our research team to access. This also means that we will not be inviting the public to update the database directly. This decision was made for a variety of reasons, including protecting the safety and security of trans filmmakers and their data, and to eliminate a reliance on unpaid, volunteer labour. Therefore, we will aim to make the language in the spreadsheets and project documentation accessible to our team members, but they are no longer directed at the general public.

## 2.2. Add a living glossary to the website

– In progress ▾

The *Usability Test Report 2020* states:

A glossary of terms will be useful for the user as they navigate the website and also serve as an additional teaching tool provided by the Transgender Media Portal. Terms that have a glossary definition could appear with a distinct visual marker and show the definition when the user hovers over them.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



This is one of the recommendations that we have added to the decentering whiteness audit of the website. The TMP is planning to review and implement these recommendations when building the HTML version of the site in 2022–2023.

## 2.3. Rearrange the layout of the homepage

– In progress ▾

The *Usability Test Report 2020* recommends “rearrang[ing] the layout of the homepage by placing the description directly on the homepage and putting the Resource boxes at the top of the homepage, with the News and Events closer to the bottom of the page.”<sup>9</sup> This is one of the recommendations that we have added to the decentering whiteness audit of the website. The TMP is planning to review and implement these recommendations when building the HTML version of the site in 2022–2023.

## 2.4. Add photos to the BIPOC Trans Filmmakers page

– In progress ▾

This is one of the recommendations that we have added to the decentering whiteness audit of the website. We are currently creating a form and instructions for submitting photos, including an image metadata and consent agreement, that we will send to everyone listed on the BIPOC Trans Filmmakers page and everyone who requests to be added to it. We hope to have photos up on the HTML version of the site in 2022–2023.

## 2.5. Be transparent about the project’s limitations

– In progress ▾

The *Usability Test Report 2020* states the following:

... we recommend adding a statement to the public website about the project’s aspirations and limitations, given its situatedness in academic and state-funded institutions that continue to perpetuate and benefit from settler-colonialism, anti-Blackness, ableism, and transmisogyny. Remaining clear and transparent

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



about the project's scope and limitations is the most effective way to address this unease. The statement will also include our commitment to researching and implementing anti-colonial database practices.<sup>10</sup>

This is one of the recommendations that we have added to the decentering whiteness audit of the website. We plan to post this statement to the website in May 2022.

### 3. Additional Anti-Racist Lab Activities

In addition to these commitments that came out of the 2020 usability tests, we have undertaken several additional anti-racist actions this year:

- In consultation with the research team, RAs Jada Gannon-Day and Brooke Modestita created a [BIPOC Community Relations Policy](#), which will be posted to the website in May 2022. This policy addresses the TMP and TML's location within a settler colonial institution benefitting from institutional power and privilege. The policy further outlines protocols for ensuring that the TMP's commitment to anti-colonial and anti-racist values will be implemented within the work of the TMP and TML.
- The research team created a Disability Justice working group that will create a plan for incorporating disability justice more fully into all our work. Our first steps were to read and discuss the first chapters of "[Disability Justice: An Audit Toolkit](#)" as a group.

The following additional activities were directly inspired by CLEAR Lab's feminist anti-colonial approach to running a lab:

- In consultation with the leadership team, TML PhD fellow Evie Ruddy created a lab handbook that explains what we do, why, and how, and that will connect our actions and activities to our fundamental values.
- Dr. Horak and 2 members of the leadership team took the Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance's (AORTA) "Facilitate for Freedom Fundamentals Training" and shared the training materials with the rest of the lab.
- The entire lab undertook anti-oppression facilitation training and conflict resolution trainings led by Sharmeen Khan.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 25.



- Facilitated by Sharmeen, the entire lab also spent time articulating and defining our lab values, which will be described in the lab handbook.
- The lab adopted CLEAR's approach to determining author order transparently, collaboratively, and taking structural oppression and social location into account. As a lab, we collectively determined the author order for the policy documents created in 2021–2022.

## Conclusion

Since the *Usability Test Report 2020* was published in June 2020, the TML has increased the number of BIPOC trans and gender questioning RAs from 0 to 3, as the number of team members has increased from five to thirteen. However, the four-person leadership team remains white and three of the four members are cis. We hope to add our newly hired Front End Developer, who is BIPOC trans and will hopefully co-lead the work of the tech team, to the leadership team in Fall 2022, if it is feasible given his workload.

## Key Learnings

The process of developing the accountability report has been an effective exercise – not only in prompting us to take action in response to the immediate concerns that arose from the usability test but, additionally, in encouraging us to foster a more critical self-reflexive gaze. The process of turning inward to intentionally analyze the ways in which our project either upholds or challenges the histories of colonization from which we emerge has led to more rigorous questioning at the decision-making level, more critical scrutiny of methods and processes we inhabit, and the development of numerous working groups tasked with building policy, seeking consultation and directly connecting with communities who are not, as of yet, well represented within Transgender Media Lab team. While our team grows to be more representative of marginalized communities, we recognize that we cannot ask individuals to stand in for entire communities which is why the development of sub-committees, policy, and the ongoing work of building relationships with external communities will serve us well into the future of this project.

Based on the findings of this year's accountability report, we recommend the following action plan for 2022–2023:

1. **Continue all in-progress actions (above).**
2. **Implement the following New Recommendations:**
  - Hiring:
    - Develop a more clearly defined protocol for how the TML prioritizes candidates in hiring.
    - Decide whether or not to prioritize additional identities (e.g. trans) in the hiring process when there are no BIPOC trans candidates.
    - Ask all applicants to fill out a short demographic survey so that our accountability data will be more accurate. This survey will take the variability and fluidity of identity into account.
  - Advisory Boards & Project Leadership:
    - Amend the commitment to read: “Ensure that the Community Advisory Board has a majority (>50%) BIPOC membership and that the Technical Advisory Board prioritize trans and BIPOC members.”
    - Create a protocol articulating how the project will prioritize BIPOC members for the Technical Advisory Board.
    - As the BIPOC trans people at Carleton appear to be mostly undergraduates, we recommend finding ways for them to be involved in the project beyond RAships, such as a seat on the Community Advisory Board.
    - Amend the commitment to: “Ensure future project director maintains and expands project’s commitment to centering BIPOC trans filmmakers and commits to hiring and mentoring more BIPOC trans workers in their own organization and to creating an anti-racist work environment.”
  - Website:
    - Complete first round of website revisions in Spring 2022.
    - Incorporate structural changes and aesthetic commitment to anti-racism into HTML website design.
  - Usability Tests:
    - The TMP plans to run additional usability test/community consultations in 2022–23. Given the importance of community consultations, we recommend the TMP make a stronger commitment that not only prioritizes recruiting BIPOC users but that ensures at least half (50%) of test users in the project’s usability tests with trans filmmakers are BIPOC,

that such usability tests have at least one Indigenous user and one disabled user, and that all test users be trans and Two Spirit.

- Include questions about whiteness and anti-racism in the next round of usability tests/community consultations.

**3. Post an updated accountability report in May 2023.**